

REMARKS

Applicant would like to thank the Examiner for the careful consideration given the present application. The application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office action, and amended as necessary to more clearly and particularly describe the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

By this amendment, claims 1-4 have been amended. Support for the amendments made to claim 1 can be found on page 17, line 26, to page 18, line 3 of the specification. No claims have been canceled and no new claims have been added to the application. Accordingly, claims 1-4 are pending in the application. No new matter has been added.

In the prior Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-3 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Wycech, U.S. Pat. 4,751,249. For the reasons set forth herein, applicant respectfully submits that Wycech does not anticipate the invention as claimed in claims 1-3. Reconsideration is thus respectfully requested.

Wycech discloses a "precast" insert (see Abstract) that can be placed within a structural member for an automobile and heated. The insert 10 is formed in a mold cavity (see Figs. 2-4). Specifically, pellets 15 formed of a thermosetting polymeric resin and a blowing agent (see col. 4, lines 21-23) are placed into the mold cavity together with unexpanded polystyrene pellets 22 (see col. 5, lines 27-38). The unexpanded polystyrene pellets 22 fill the interstitial spaces between the pellets 15 and the walls of the mold cavity. Steam, heated air or gas is then injected into the mold to cause the polystyrene pellets 22 to expand, forming expanded polystyrene 22', which captures and retains the pellets 15, thereby forming the "precast" insert 10 (see col. 5, lines 42-53). Wycech teaches that the "precast" insert 10 can be

placed inside a structural member 12 (see col. 6, lines 55-63). When the structural member 12 is heated, the "precast" insert disposed therein undergoes changes. Specifically, the expanded polystyrene 22' vaporizes and the pellets 15 expand and bond to themselves and to the inner walls of the structural member (see col. 7, lines 25-54).

The process disclosed in Wycech produces a structural member that is significantly different than claimed in claim 1. Claim 1, as amended, claims a skeleton structural member comprising a hollow skeleton member and multiple granules packed inside the skeleton member and/or a space bounded by the skeleton member and a panel member peripheral to the skeleton member, "wherein the multiple granules are contained in a closed space bounded at least in part by an expanded partition wall member provided inside the skeleton member and/or space" (underlined emphasis added). There is no expanded partition wall member in the structural member according to Wycech. The expanded polystyrene 22' in the "precast" insert according to Wycech degrades "to a thin film or soot" (see col. 7, lines 31-33) when the structural member is heated, leaving only the expanded pellets 15 behind. Thus the expanded pellets 15 in the structural member according to Wycech are not contained in a closed space bounded at least in part by an expanded partition wall member as required by claim 1. Applicant's skeleton structural member as claimed in claim 1 is clearly not anticipated by Wycech.

Also in the prior Office Action, the Examiner rejected claim 4 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Wycech in view of Bock et al. The Examiner contends that Wycech discloses a method for manufacturing a skeleton structural member as claimed, except that Wycech does not disclose disposing the partition

wall forming members apart from each other. As noted above, this is in error. There are no partition wall members at all in the structural member according to Wycech. After heating, all that remains are expanded pellets.

Bock et al. teaches that "segments" can be placed within structural members of automobiles to reinforce the structural members. Bock et al. teaches that each of the "segments" is "composed of a polymeric material such as nylon, an injection molded nylon carrier, an injection molded polymer, graphite, carbon or a molded metal" (see [0011]) that is at least partially coated with a bonding material that preferably comprises a heat-activated structural foam, which expands and cures upon heating (see [0031]). Neither Wycech nor Bock et al. fairly teaches a method for manufacturing a skeleton structural member that comprises the steps of disposing a vessel or a bag containing a plurality of spaced apart partition wall forming members and multiple granules inside the skeleton member and/or space and heating the skeleton member with the vessel or the bag containing the plurality of partition wall forming members and multiple granules disposed inside the skeleton member and/or space as claimed in claim 4. Accordingly, the rejection of claim 4 should be withdrawn.

In light of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in a condition for allowance and notice to that effect is hereby requested. If it is determined that the application is not in a condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to initiate a telephone interview with the undersigned attorney to expedite prosecution of the present application.

If there are any additional fees resulting from this communication, please charge same to our Deposit Account No. 18-0160, our Order No. SHM-16349.

Respectfully submitted,

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